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For information

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Report of the field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 11 to 15 April 2011

I. Introduction

1. The field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board to the Plurinational State of Bolivia from 11 to 15 April 2011 included the following members and representatives of the Bureau — Ms. Simona Leskovar, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations; Mr. Hassan Ali Hassan, Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sudan to the United Nations; Ms. Gillian Joseph, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations; Ms. Grata Werdaningtyas, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations; Ms. Marit van Zomeren, Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations — and Mr. Nicolas Charles Pron, Secretary of the Executive Board.

2. The field visit allowed the delegation to gain a first-hand understanding of the work of UNICEF at the country level. More specifically, the visit aimed at demonstrating concrete examples of UNICEF cooperation with the Government and with other partners, including the United Nations country team. Furthermore, the visit provided an opportunity for the members of the delegation to better understand the issues and challenges facing children and women in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

3. The delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the opportunities for substantive dialogue with senior members of the Government.

4. The delegation would like to thank the UNICEF country team, particularly in La Paz and Cochabamba, for the very carefully prepared and well-organized visit,

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and for making staff readily available throughout the visit. The participants were impressed by the commitment and dedication of Bolivian officials at every level and with the UNICEF staff.

5. The delegation met with local government representatives; civil society organizations; health workers; teachers; school administrators; students; members of community groups; and UNICEF staff. The field visit programme consisted of two main components:

(a) Meetings in La Paz with the UNICEF country office, senior-level government counterparts, members of the United Nations country team, as well as key donors;

(b) A field trip to Cochabamba, where the delegation visited UNICEF projects in Tapacarì, in the Chuñu Chuñuni community. The delegation saw a variety of community-based projects and met with Municipal and Communal Authorities, as well as with the people and children of that community.

6. The present report summarizes the briefings received by the delegation and concludes with the delegation's own observations.

II. Key issues facing children and women

7. Despite significant social progress, Bolivia is the third-poorest country in the Latin America and Caribbean region and the poorest country in South America. Some 26 per cent[1] of its population lives in extreme poverty (less than $1 per person per day) and 51 per cent[2] of its population lives in poverty of some degree (less than $2 per person per day), according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010. Some 5 out of every 10 poor people are children (45 per cent). The country is multicultural, with more than 60 per cent of its peoples identifying themselves as indigenous.

8. The country demonstrates low indicators for human development. Infant mortality has declined but is still twice the level of the average of the region. Infant malnutrition has also declined but, again, is higher than the regional average. Below these national averages are even lower indicators for some segments of the population. Inequalities affect especially women and indigenous people, people living in rural areas and poor people.

9. Most likely, the Millennium Development Goals for education, water and sanitation will not be met, and challenges persist for reaching the Goals related to infant and child mortality. The main challenges are strengthening democratic institutions and government capacities and strengthening systems for delivery of basic social services and ensuring the fulfilment of social rights.

10. The participants were informed that the Government has initiated important political and institutional reforms, focusing on expanding the realization of the rights of the population, in particular those who are indigenous and vulnerable. The delegation noted that the 'equity approach' of UNICEF fits well into the context of

[1] 2009 Progress Report on the MDGs of Bolivia made by the Inter-institutional Committee on the MDGs and the Unit of Analysis of Social and Economic Policies (Unidad de Análisis de Politicas Sociales y Económicas, or UDAPE).

[2] Ibid.

these reforms and that UNICEF was trying to help to address the social inequalities in the country.

11. During its visit to several project sites around La Paz and in the province of Cochabamba, the delegation had an opportunity to gain a first-hand impression of the situation of children and women, as well as indigenous communities.

Child and adolescent survival, health and development

12. Progress has been achieved in several areas. Survival for infants and children has improved. By 2008 the infant mortality rate had been reduced to 50 deaths per 1,000 live births. Nutrition in children under five has also improved: chronic malnutrition decreased from 27 per cent in 2003 to 22 per cent in 2008. The maternal mortality ratio had decreased to 180 deaths per 100,000 live births. However, this progress should be steadily sustained if the country is to achieve the 2015 targets for the Millennium Development Goals. There are persistent gaps between urban and rural areas, as well as inequalities affecting girls, the poor and indigenous peoples. Another concern is the increased number of reported cases of HIV infection in recent years; 28 per cent of all cases occur among the 15-24 age group.

13. The delegation was informed that the main challenge in the health sector is the state of the current national health-care system. Key issues are the low quality of health services and access to them, particularly in rural and remote areas; the insufficient number of medical professionals; and cultural barriers to access. The Minister of Health described to the delegation key national policies and initiatives being taken. According the Minister, the National Health Care Plan, which includes providing universal insurance coverage for pregnant mothers and children under 5, has been implemented gradually. The Government has also implemented a cash transfer programme, "Juana Azurduy", promoting regular health check-ups as well as a breastfeeding programme and a 'zero malnutrition' programme.

14. The Government also provides incentives to encourage more students and medical professionals to work in rural areas and supports Community and Family Residence Healthcare by providing training and advocacy. Another measure taken was the introduction of an intercultural element in health facilities combining modern medical practices and traditional medicines, and promotion of a collaboration between modern practitioners and traditional medical experts. The delegation visited a health-care centre in Cochabamba and witnessed this intercultural combination first-hand.

15. UNICEF, in cooperation with government institutions, has contributed to the progress made in health, and to promoting the universal right to health. The areas in which UNICEF is working include reducing neonatal and maternal mortality; improving health indicators for children and adolescents; and reducing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. UNICEF also supports the Government by providing technical assistance and advice to improve health capacities and strengthen institutions. For example, UNICEF is working with the Government to increase the number of hospitals that are mother- and child-friendly, so that these can serve as models for other health facilities.

16. Participants were informed that UNICEF worked directly with communities to address cultural barriers by helping to design health services that accord with local

cultures and traditions. UNICEF is also promoting community empowerment through the Maternal Home programme, which provides pregnant women with a comfortable environment in which to give birth and with training in raising healthy children. Through its health programme, UNICEF also supports nutrition services and food fortification. Finally, UNICEF has been involved in the drafting and formulation of a new bill on health, which will consolidate all efforts in delivering general health care and services nationally.

Water, hygiene and healthy environments

17. Despite the fact that the country is expected to achieve the Millennium Development Goals target for drinking water[3] (by 2009, 75 per cent of the population had access to potable water), the pace of progress in the provision of drinking water and sanitation has been insufficient, especially in rural areas. It is estimated that only half of the population in these areas will have access to clean drinking water by 2015. In access to sanitation as well, rural populations lag far behind the general population, and the country is not expected to achieve the target on access to safe sanitation (by 2009, only 48 per cent[4] of the population had access to sanitation services). The delegation met with the Minister of the Environment and Water, who is also responsible for Food Security. She stressed the link between water and climate change and environmental issues generally. The Minister explained that progress in sanitation is slow partly because it is not seen as a priority at the local level. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a separate meeting, emphasized the importance of water as a human right and public policy priority. On the visit to Cochabamba, the participants were informed about a local water, sanitation and hygiene project benefiting the Tapacari community, who were making efforts to change behaviour, for instance by introducing hand-washing with soap.

18. UNICEF has contributed to strengthening capacities and has provided technical assistance at the national, departmental and community levels. In communities with populations under 2,000 inhabitants, UNICEF introduced the Programmatic Approach to Water and Sanitation and applied the concept of Community-led Total Sanitation, which encourages communities themselves to build latrines and bathrooms. These approaches aim at building the capacities of these communities and gradually handing over responsibilities to them. A Multi-Donor programme has helped increase access to drinking water and sanitation, construction of school bathrooms and hand-washing with soap. According to the midterm review of the country programme, more work needs to be done to enhance the knowledge and practices of communities in order to improve hygiene habits.

Education for life and citizenship

19. Progress in education is lagging behind that for most other Millennium Development Goals, and rural populations, indigenous people and girls tend to receive fewer years of education. School attendance for children aged 6 to 19 is 79 per cent at the national level and 74 per cent in rural areas. The primary school dropout rate for boys is 5 per cent, and for girls 4 per cent. The Net Enrolment Rate

[3] The goal for 2015 is 78.5 per cent, according to the 2009 Progress Report on the MDGs of Bolivia.

[4] 2009 Progress Report on the MDGs of Bolivia.

(NER) for all levels is 72 per cent for girls and 71 per cent for boys. The primary school completion rate is 77 per cent. In disadvantaged areas, such as the Amazon and Guaraní-speaking areas, the NER for 6th grade is 88 per cent, and 52 per cent for 8th grade. More than 87,000 primary school-aged girls and boys are left out of the formal education system. Moreover, attention to early learning and development (school readiness) is seriously lacking. At preschool level, the NER is 32 per cent, and at primary school level 90 per cent. By contrast, in UNICEF-supported target municipalities in 2008, preschool NER was reported to be 18 per cent, and the primary school completion rate 53 per cent. Poverty, cultural beliefs and values, and emergencies due to natural disasters, as well as weak teaching and educational management hinder access to and the quality of education. The rate of literacy is higher, reported at 90 per cent nationally.

20. With the adoption of the new Education Law, access to compulsory, free, quality education is recognized as a fundamental human right for all. The law promotes equal opportunities in access to education for indigenous people and most vulnerable groups. To further strengthen equity in education, the Government maintains a universal and conditional cash-transfer system ("Juancito Pinto") of around $40 per child per year.

21. The strategies of the programme of cooperation contribute to the implementation of the new Education Law and the related national and local education policies that are emerging, which focus on the programme on Intra- and Inter-cultural Pluri-lingual Education. This programme seeks to provide equal opportunities to all children and adolescents (with emphasis on the most vulnerable: indigenous girls in rural areas), and to promote increased access to quality Integrated Early Childhood Development, inclusive quality basic education, and school retention and completion.

22. Another pillar of intra-, inter- and pluri-lingual education is the Child-Friendly Schools Initiative (CFSI). The initiative aims to establish and strengthen education environments that are conducive to learning and based on child rights. The focus is on protection, safety, health, equity in gender and culture, participation of children and communities in education management, as well as reduction of risks related to natural disasters and the vulnerability of the rights of children and adolescents. As a vital innovation, the CFSI is the guiding framework for effective implementation of the life-cycle approach. One concern is that there are serious shortfalls in funding for the CFSI interventions in border areas of the country.

23. The participants learned more about the Government's pluricultural education programmes during the visit to the Ministry of Education. They also visited a child-friendly primary school in El Alto, where children had been taught about their rights, and met with parents' and teachers' associations. In addition, the delegation visited a project involving high school students, which was raising awareness of human security and life skills issues. In Cochabamba, delegation visited an Early Childhood Development project as well as a primary school.

Child rights protection

24. The Government adopted a Law for the Legal Protection of Children and Adolescents, which includes tougher penal sentences for crimes committed against children and adolescents. The main objective of this law is to prohibit any sort of abuse and/or violence against children. However, the implementation entities at the

national, departmental and municipal levels in charge of the policies to protect the rights of children and adolescents are still inadequate, information and monitoring systems are still quite weak.

25. The UNICEF-assisted child rights protection programme supports the National Protection System, which aims to integrate the work of Child Offence Offices in municipalities. The programme also seeks to harmonize national legislation with international legal instruments. In support of all these efforts, UNICEF works to strengthen the capacities of judges, police officers and state officials.

26. UNICEF further works to build capacity in defending and protecting the rights of children and adolescents pertaining to the worst forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and exploitation. UNICEF worked with the Public Defender's Office to set up an alliance for solid and effective responses to cases of violence. To protect child labourers, UNICEF has helped to coordinate the work of national and departmental authorities by setting up four sub-commissions for the eradication of exploitative child labour in the harvesting of sugarcane and Brazil nuts. UNICEF also provides technical support to a new proposal for reform to chapter 6 of the Child and Adolescent Code. Finally, in 46 municipalities UNICEF is involved in intersectoral interventions. Partly as a result, some 90 per cent of the Municipal Defenders of Children and Adolescents are carrying out awareness-raising activities and promoting broad social participation.

27. The delegation visited a centre for psychosocial support (a therapeutic attention centre) in La Paz and met with the Ombudsman and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in child protection. The delegation also attended a Special Session with the Departmental Assembly of Cochabamba, where the Governor, UNICEF and various parties signed an agreement on children and adolescents, child protection and children's rights. This was part of a presentation of the Departmental Agreement for Children in support of the Vivir Bien ("live well") movement, with participation by several departmental authorities. The delegation also met with the State Prosecutor and District Prosecutor for Cochabamba.

Public policy, advocacy and alliances for children's rights

28. In 2009, the new Constitution explicitly recognized human rights, particularly those of indigenous populations. UNICEF is supporting this major advance in promoting inclusiveness and universal opportunity by assisting the Government in strengthening the capacity of State institutions in this area.

29. At the local levels, coordination of public policies in favour of children is weak. Responding to this challenge, UNICEF has helped to establish Inter-Sector Municipal Committees in 48 municipalities. These committees coordinate different aspects of the work of municipal governments and promote the construction of a protective environment for children and adolescents.

30. The delegation met with the Vice-President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who expressed the commitment of his Government to social development, in particular the well-being of children and of indigenous people. The delegation also attended a Special Session at the Plurinational Congress on the Occasion of the Bolivian Child Day Meeting, which included a meeting of the children's parliament. The delegation also met with the President of the Chamber of Senators and President of the Chamber of Deputies. In another meeting, the Vice-Minister for

Autonomy explained the ongoing decentralization and the devolution of authority to the (indigenous) departments. The delegation also met with youth who work with the media, reporting on children's issues.

Emergency preparedness and response

31. UNICEF is part of the Humanitarian Network, involving the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other entities involved in humanitarian work. The network provides assistance in natural disasters and works on preparedness and disaster risk reduction. As yet, there is no consolidated policy for the administration of disaster risk reduction.

32. The participants learned during meetings with various governmental authorities and donors, and from conversations with members of the UNICEF country team, that in February and March 2011 serious mudslides in La Paz had affected thousands of households. United Nations organizations had proactively offered assistance under the leadership of UNICEF, which was very much appreciated. The Government has not formally issued an appeal for funding.

III. The role of UNICEF in Bolivia

33. UNICEF works in the various sectors mentioned above. An important part of the programme takes place at the subnational level, where UNICEF in addition to implementing its regular programmes, engages in innovative pilot projects at departmental, municipal and community level. These help to advance social development and children's rights and well-being. UNICEF has assisted the Government in capacity-building and policymaking, scaling up successful programmes and assessing what works.

34. The participants met with key donor representatives, who encouraged UNICEF to align its work with governmental policies and to coordinate closely with other partners. Staff members of UNICEF assured donors that, according to the midterm review of the country programme, the work of the organization is well aligned with governmental policies. They also noted that the work is focused on the subnational level.

35. The delegation also met with the United Nations country team and learned that UNICEF collaborates well with other agencies, in particular through joint programmes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

36. The delegation learned more about the role of UNICEF during meetings with key partners of UNICEF, such as the Vice-President and representatives from the ministries of Health, Water, Planning, Autonomy, Labour and Gender Equality, as well as from Parliament. During the visit to Cochabamba, the participants witnessed the close collaboration between UNICEF and the departmental authorities (Governor), municipal authorities and community leaders. The delegation gained insight into how UNICEF works in Cochabamba in local development, health, education, protection, water and hygiene and social protection.

37. One area for improvement, the delegation learned, is the evidence base for successful programming. UNICEF intends to enhance its assistance to the Government for data collection and analysis.

Observations

38. The participants had the opportunity to learn about all aspects of the country programme of cooperation and were very pleased to note the hard work and significant results of the UNICEF office, particularly in the fields of protection, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene.

39. The delegation noted with appreciation the excellent cooperation between UNICEF and the central, departmental and municipal authorities. Government partners clearly welcomed the active role of UNICEF in many sectors and were willing to take over responsibilities and scale up successful projects.

40. It was noted that UNICEF places greater emphasis on cooperation and coordination with governmental authorities than with sister organizations of the United Nations, donor agencies and NGOs. While acknowledging the specificity of the situation and the focus of UNICEF on the subnational level, the members of the delegation feel that it is crucial that UNICEF attaches enough importance to working jointly with such other partners. It was felt that the Mid-Term Review of the UNDAF and the drafting of a new UNDAF would provide opportunities for closer collaboration among United Nations organizations.

41. The Plurinational State of Bolivia is undergoing a process of profound reforms, including decentralization and devolving powers to the departments and indigenous populations. This context offers an opportunity for UNICEF to work on the 'equity approach' in an innovative manner and assist the authorities in targeting the most vulnerable groups, including children and women.

42. During the visit, participants witnessed social unrest: demonstrations by workers who were demanding a pay raise blocked access to parts of La Paz and Cochabamba. The delegation was informed that civil society organizations and social movements are always very active in Bolivia and that civil participation and protests are common. The participants were grateful for the good care and services provided by the staff of UNICEF, the United Nations Department for Safety and Security and the police, who guarded the safety of the delegation and explained the situation.

43. At the end of the field visit, the UNICEF country office concluded that the visit had encouraged the team to more exactly identify the priorities of the country programme and to make the work of UNICEF more systemic and evidence-based.

44. Among its many other benefits, the visit helped to strengthen relations with governmental counterparts and offered an opportunity for UNICEF to publicize its work through the media. It also demonstrated the difficulty of ensuring meaningful child participation. Members of the delegation concur that the visit was useful in that it allowed them and the UNICEF office to more directly identify priorities and enhance relations with the various counterparts. The delegation agrees that UNICEF should continue to work with the Government to systematize good practices and scale up successful pilot projects to help to improve the policies of the Government.

Annex

Summary of the programme of the field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board to the Plurinational State of Bolivia

La Paz

Monday, 11 April

1. Meeting with the UNICEF Bolivia country office staff and briefing by the Representative and country management team
2. Visit to the Therapeutic Attention Centre
3. Meeting with officials of the Ministry of Education
4. Meeting with representatives of the Office of the Public Defender and of the Italian Cooperation

Tuesday, 12 April

1. Participation in the Children's Day Special Session at the Plurinational Assembly of Bolivia
2. Meeting with the Vice-Minister of Autonomy
3. Meeting with the Vice-President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
4. Meeting with the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs

Wednesday, 13 April

1. Meeting with the United Nations country team
2. Meeting with Ministers and Vice-Ministers working with UNICEF
3. Visit to a child-friendly school in El Alto (NGO working with youth and the media)
4. Visit to Eco Jovenes Association
5. Meeting with key donors and entities promoting development

Province of Cochabamba

Thursday, 14 April

1. Meeting with staff of UNICEF and the Departmental Government of Cochabamba
2. Participation in the Departmental Agreement for Children: "Para Vivir Bien" with the Governor and stakeholders
3. Meetings with departmental authorities, the State Prosecutor and District Prosecutor
4. Meeting with representatives of youth organizations participating in the Human Safety Project for Adolescents

Municipality of Tapacari; La Paz

Friday, 15 April

5. **Visit to a local community, Chuñu Chuñuni, and municipal and communal authorities**

6. **Debriefing with UNICEF Bolivia country management team**